

PLEASE KEEP

MINISTRY OF



AGRICULTURE

ALLOTMENT &

Garden Guide

VOL. 1 No. 8

AUGUST - 1945



'This is the month of weeds
Kex, charlock, thistle . . .
Spurry, pimpernel, quitch . . .
Making for trouble.
This is the month of weeds.'



Before Roman holidays were popularised in these islands August was Weedmonath—the month of weeds. Nature probably realised that harvest would fully occupy man's attention at this time of the year, and cunningly contrived for most of the wickedest weeds to shed their seeds. The Romans just helped things along by encouraging everyone who was not helping with the harvest, to sit in the sun—to take a holiday. And very pleasant too—when these islands held but a handful of people, but holidays are not for the gardeners in a population of 48 million people on an island in a world short of food and short of ships to carry it. So—first of all—keep the hoe going. What feeds a weed will feed a cabbage to feed you.

Even if there were no weeds there would still be plenty to do in the garden, for this is the time of

gathering the fruits of labour. And careful harvesting is just as important as careful sowing and careful growing.

Dwarf, French and runner beans require frequent picking or they will grow tough and stringy. If you have more than you and your friends can eat now, remember that they can be easily salted down for winter use. Regular picking of runner beans helps to make a longer fruiting season. But do not pick any beans from the plants you may have selected for seed.

Pull and use early beet. If left in the ground too long the roots will become woody and stringy. Any early-sown carrots that remain should be used up quickly. Summer turnips are ready to use, and marrows and tomatoes should be gathered as they ripen. Onions are important enough to have a section to themselves (see page 4).

Pick herbs now—just before they flower. Gather shoots of thyme, sage, mint, marjoram, tarragon and parsley. Tie them in bundles, wash them, cover with muslin to keep out

dust and hang to dry in an airy shed or near the fire. When thoroughly dry and crisp, crush to a mealy texture and store in lidded jars or bottles away from the light.

Your last chance TAKE STOCK

Now is the time to make sure of winter's greenstuff—to make good losses caused by pests or diseases—to check your planning. Now is your opportunity to sit down after that back-aching weeding—just sit and think—sit and make sure—it's your last chance.

If you have not yet sown spring cabbage, do so at once or it will soon be too late. Do not sow in that part of the seedbed where spring sowings of cabbage were made this year. The soil may contain Cabbage Root Fly or the sports of Club Root. Sow seed thinly 1 in. deep in drills made 6 in. apart; sow enough to plant four rows of spring cabbage on the ground which will be left free after the onions are harvested. Do not

sow too many, but allow a small reserve for making good any losses after planting out in September. If possible, sow after rain; or if the soil is very dry, water the seedbed a few hours before sowing. Where space is confined, sow "Harbinger", which is compact and hearty. Where more room is available "Early Offenhams" and "Durham Early" are good varieties.

Sow late kale now where it is to mature, and thin as required during growth—it will give you a late green crop in March and April. Sow winter radish—they can be lifted and stored. Smooth-leaved Batavian endive, sown now and treated as lettuce, will last well into the winter, if it is blanched by tying up loosely with raffia and protected by a pot or box.

The main thing is to make sure of winter greens. Sow now for the lean months. If you are following the Ministry's Cropping Plan, make yourself completely comfortable in a deck chair—and study it. If you have any gaps or corners to spare, fill them with winter greens.



Prepare for AUTUMN SOWINGS

Ground for winter lettuce and turnips should be prepared a week or two in advance. Avoid ground likely to become damp in the winter; lettuces can stand up to cold much better than to wet conditions.

Dig the ground over one spade's depth and leave it for a week or more to settle. If the soil is poor, rake in a dressing of 1-1½ oz. per square yard of National Growmore fertiliser. If the ground was not limed in the spring, dress with lime



and fork in lightly immediately after digging, but do not apply at the same time as the fertiliser. Leave the ground alone until the lime is well washed in and then—just before sowing—apply the fertiliser and fork it in lightly.

For lettuce, tread the ground

firmly and evenly and rake it down finely. Choose a variety suitable for winter and sow seed thinly in drills $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep and 1 ft. apart. When seedlings are large enough to be handled in late September and early October, they will be thinned out to 9 in. apart.

TOMATOES

Strong growth and plentiful flowers can be misleading. It is rare for us even in the best of summers to have the long spells of sunshine necessary to ripen more than four trusses of fruit. So "stop" the plants by pinching out the main growing shoot. Nip it off just above the fourth truss. Even if four trusses have not set, the stopping should be done by the third week of the month. There is nothing to be gained by leaving the plants to grow on.

Keep moisture at the roots. Allowing the soil to dry out and then trying to correct matters by soaking, only leads to split fruit. If you have the material, apply a generous mulch (see page 4) and do not let the soil surface cake hard. Keep feeding the plants, but do not overdo it; and especially at this stage avoid too much nitrogen—sulphate of ammonia or nitrate of soda—which will only promote rank growth and fruit that lacks flavour.



It also makes the plants less resistant to disease.

Let the sun get at the fruit. This does not mean recklessly cutting out every leaf that is in the way. Remember that the leaves of plants play an important part in their nutrition. Remove any dead or withered leaves from the base, of course, and then carefully thin out, here and there, to uncover developing trusses. Keep a sharp lookout for any side shoots that you may have missed. Watch out also for blight (see June Guide) and give another spraying or dusting as a precaution.

Now is the time when the quality of plants tells. If yours are not all they should be, make a resolution to start with better stock next year. There are still too many over-forced weakly plants bought by the unwary.

ONIONS

A little meat goes a long way—with plenty of onions to flavour the dish. We shall need all the meat-stretching flavour we can harvest, and now is the critical time in the life of the spring-sown onion. On the care taken in lifting and ripening depends its ability to keep well in storage.

First step is to bend the tops over and then leave for about a fortnight while they shrivel. If you have some "bull-necks" which refuse to be bent, use them up in the kitchen in the next few weeks.

To lift, loosen the bulbs by pushing a fork into the soil well under them, and lever them up. Then lay the



Sow Onions

See that the soil is firm, and sow fairly thickly. Use varieties of the White Spanish type or those specially recommended for autumn sowing. In the North, the first week in the

bulbs on their side with the under-surface and roots so placed as to catch the full sun. Now they must be thoroughly dried before you take them into the dry shed, spare bedroom or wherever you are going to store them.

If the month is a "baker," the process should not take long—just lay the bulbs on firm ground or on a path until the skins are really dry. If the weather alternates between dry and wet, the onions must be lifted off the soil and the most made of the sunny spells by sheltering your onions on a home-made drying frame. Prop a piece of wire netting on four corner pegs, spread the bulbs on it, then above them—about 3 in. higher—prop a sheet of corrugated iron on four more pegs. The sun, when it comes, beats on the iron and warms the onions beneath; the air circulates freely, and the crop ripens quickly and well.



month is the time: the third week is early enough down South.

Some growers divide their sowings, saving some of the seed till late December. They find that the December sowing produces fewer plants that run to seed. But whenever you sow, keep weeds firmly in check.

Hold that moisture

About 300 years ago, a scientist planted a willow shoot weighing 5 lb. in a barrel holding 200 lb. of dry soil. For five years he gave it nothing but pure water. He finished with a fine tree weighing over 169 lb. :

and the soil had lost a trifling 2 oz., so he concluded that water was the "principle of vegetation."

Other scientists have since found it isn't quite as simple as that, but none of them has grown a plant

without water. In fact, it takes anything up to 1,000 lb. of water to produce a single pound of plant substance.

Plants are just as thirsty in August as human beings are, though they are unable to trot into the kitchen or down the road. But they do have roots able to draw on the available moisture in the soil. It's up to us to see that the moisture gets to the roots and not into the warm air. Much can be done by timely hoeing to stop the soil cracking when it has been beaten down by heavy rains or watering. But a better way to keep the roots of peas, runner beans and tomatoes supplied with moisture is to spread a layer of half-rotted manure with plenty of straw in it, well-rotted compost material, or even decayed lawn-mowings, between the rows and around the plants. This is a mulch, but it is next to useless if

you put it on already bone dry soil. Seize the moment after a fall of rain, or if the rain fails, give the ground a good soaking.

See that the mulch is open in texture: heavy impenetrable stuff keeps the air from the soil and may even tend to sour it. Watch your lawn-mowings specially. Mulching also helps to keep down the weeds.



STOP PEST NEWS

By this time in the year the patient gardener is prepared—or he should be—for anything in the nature of pests. This month's particular unpleasantness may take the form of Cabbage Aphid on the members of the cabbage family. It is easy enough to recognise. Leaves begin to curl or crinkle; part of the leaf turns a paler green, and on the underside of the crinkled leaf is a mass of greyish-blue, powdery-looking insects busily sucking the vitality out of your plants and crippling them.

If these pests find their way into growing hearts of your young kales, sprouts or other green stuff, they may check the plants so badly that the crop will be very poor. You will probably find too that the Aphid has discovered your seedling rows of greenstuff.

The best remedy is to spray with a good nicotine insecticide, preferably one that contains soap or some other substance that acts as a "spreader" and keeps the nicotine on the leaves. Force the spray well into the hearts

of the plants. Where there are large colonies, it is worth while squashing the insects with finger and thumb before spraying—if you can "take it." It is a messy business, but half measures are no good. Later sprayings at intervals of a few days will probably be necessary. The secret of control is to spray early enough and often enough.

WARNING

Nicotine and nicotine preparations are poisonous. Be sure to follow maker's directions. On Summer Cabbage almost ready for cutting, or other vegetables intended for the table within ten days, use a derris spray instead.



Help on the GREENS

Give late autumn and winter greens a light dressing of National Growmore fertiliser round each plant, raked or hoed in. Apply this now—feeding after this month

will make soft growth which will not stand the severe winter weather. Keep the ground firm round winter greens or they may fail to heart-up properly.

Look after the SEEDLINGS

Give seedlings of the cabbage family and turnips a light dressing of derris dust or naphthalene dust as soon as they show through.

This early treatment works better against flea beetle attack than later applications. Continue to dust with derris during growth in seed bed.

Soot for CELERY

This is a vital moment in the life of celery. Earthing-up (see June Guide) should keep up with growth. The other main needs are soot and water. Soot is the best fertiliser for the crop. The older it is, the better. It can be used on the leaves

or well watered into the soil as a manure. Do not try to produce luxuriant growth—it will probably be coarse. Aim to grow short, firm, stocky plants. Never let them get dry—water must be abundant during growth.

Those POTATO HAULMS

Every year when the early potatoes have been lifted, the question is asked "What shall I do with my potato tops?" The problem is whether to put them on the compost heap or not. The answer depends on two things, namely, how good is your compost heap and how free from disease are your potato tops?

If you have had an attack of blight, or any other disease that has affected the potato tops, the answer is simple—gather them up, all of

them, and burn them. If your crop has been clean and you have the sort of efficient compost heap that heats up well, there is nothing against chopping up the haulms, with a sharp spade, while they are soft and green, and treating them as any other waste. In a good compost heap they will soon rot down. The main thing about potato haulms is not to leave them lying about.



fork, aiming at getting them out with as much soil as possible adhering to the roots. Should the weather be dry, give the seed-bed a good soaking the night before you lift. This applies to all your brassicas.

The sketches on planting cabbage may help you. If you have to plant in dry ground, water each hole before planting, cover in with soil and again water. Half-a-pint of water should be sufficient for each plant.

Always make sure that your cabbage plants are firmly planted by testing one or two here and there as you go along the rows.

If you pull the plant by the edge of a leaf, the part between your finger and thumb should tear away. But if you pull the plant up, you are not planting firmly enough.

Early-sown *savoy*s will be reaching the stage when they should be transplanted. But it is not wise to have this crop in bearing too early in the winter, and if the larger plants are put out 2 ft. apart this month, the smaller seedlings could be transplanted 6 in. apart in an odd corner and allowed to grow on for a time before you finally put them in their permanent quarters, perhaps as late as the end of July or early in August.

On saving your own SEED

Some gardeners like having a shot at something new — seed saving, for example. Those who have not hitherto experimented in this direction might like to try it out. But it is well that they should know that while a few kinds of vegetable seeds can safely be saved by the amateur, others are best left to the experts.

You know that all flowering plants need pollen to fertilise the female part of the plant, so that it can produce seed. Some plants are fertilised by their own pollen, while others have to get it from another plant. Broadly, those that fertilise themselves are "safe"; those that need pollen from another plant should be left to the professional seed grower. Why? Well, you may be growing, say, a cabbage for seed in your garden, while another gardener not far away may be growing a Brussels sprout plant for seed. The wind or the bees may bring pollen from your neighbour's plant to your own—and your plants next year

would be an unbelievable mixture, yet would be useless to you. Now, if that were to happen in your garden, how much more serious would it be if you were to allow one of your cabbages to flower and produce seed near a commercial grower's field of Brussels sprouts growing for seed. It might cause immense trouble and ruin the quality of his seed. The only "safe" vegetables for seed-saving purposes are peas, beans of all kinds, onions, leeks, tomatoes, lettuce, ridge cucumbers and marrows.

Now is the time to mark the plants you intend to save. The best and easiest way is to tie a label on part of your rows of peas and beans and leave *all* the pods on the plants in that section for seed. Don't pick any at all for the kitchen. So often gardeners leave the last few pods on their plants. These are usually small, weakly pods and do not give really good seed. If you remember that one-tenth of your pea and bean crop

until it is horizontal. If it parts easily, it is ripe. If it fails to come away easily, let it gently back to its original place and leave for a few days. The great joy about early apple varieties is that, unlike Cox's Orange Pippin and other late kinds, they do not have to mature after picking, and it is the owner's pleasure to eat them at once.

Such delights may be especially welcome if, on going over your apple trees, you find that some apples have rotted. This is probably due to Brown Rot, a disease that destroys many tons of apples every year, and also affects plums, pears, quinces and cherries. Much of this loss can be prevented. The disease starts as a mere spot, where a slight bruise, cut or insect puncture has been invaded by disease spores, carried by wind, rain or insects. The spot gradually spreads into a soft brown patch, and at the same time small swellings under the skin break through as yellowish or buff-coloured growths — or pustules — usually in concentric circles. These diseased fruits produce a crop of spores, which are carried to other fruits by flies and wasps. And so it goes on — an endless vicious cycle that can only be checked by strict hygiene on the part of growers.

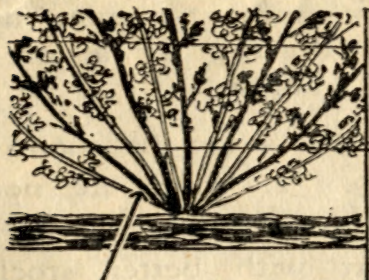
Collect from apple and plum trees and under the trees, all fruit that shows the slightest sign of the disease. Burn it. Go over the trees, especially the soft-wooded varieties

of apple such as "Lord Derby" and "James Grieve," and cut out all dead or dying spurs along with any cankers. Collect and burn. Keep an eye open in the winter for "mummied" fruit left on the trees — gather and burn it.

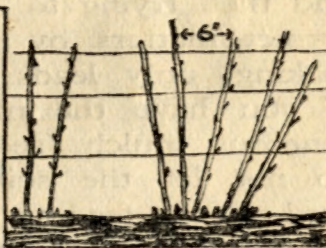
Special care is necessary when picking apples for storing. Brown Rot is liable to set in wherever there is a wound or bruise, and a favourite place of entry is the slight wound made if the stalk is torn out. So pick with the stalks on. Do not attempt to store any fruit showing signs of the disease. It will spread. And clean up under the trees. It is from mummied fruit on the trees and from rotten apples lying about that the first spore invasion usually starts.

Summer fruiting Raspberries should be pruned as soon as the last fruit has been picked. Cut out all the canes that have borne fruit. Cut them right down at ground level, leaving no snags to become resting and breeding places for pests and diseases. Burn all cut-out canes. If your canes are supported by wires, tie up the new canes, 5 or 6 in. apart, with raffia or soft string.

The same sort of treatment should be given to Blackberries and Loganberries. Cut out fruited shoots and thin out weak new growths, and any showing purplish spots (signs of the disease Cane Spot). Keep about 6 or 8 of the strongest shoots and tie them in.



CUT OUT OLD CANES



TIE UP NEW CANES